

still further be able to bring them into service for ends not more curative, or perhaps as much, than preventive in all pertaining to disease."

"Not in vain the distance beacons, forward, forward,
let us range,
Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves
of change."

COMFORT AND SAFETY IN THEATRES AND PLACES OF PUBLIC RESORT.

AS the season approaches for the re-opening, and we might say re-crowding, of places of public entertainment, it is not inappropriate that this subject, often referred to by a long-suffering, but presumably pleasure-loving public, should be discussed in a journal viewing the question from the special standpoint of the physician. W. E. Roth, Esq., has recently published a work on "Theatre Hygiene," which contains many useful and practical suggestions; referring especially to the study of the best structural and decorative arrangements to be adopted in the construction and fittings of theatres, music halls, etc., the object being the maintenance of the health, comfort, and safety, not only of the public, but of the players and other people employed. One is pleased at the place given by Mr. Roth, in the order of relative importance, to health, and glad to see its importance recognized. The history of theatres must be considered as dating back to the time of the amphitheatres of the classic nations, in which, owing to climate, the difficulties as regards fresh air and ventilation, were reduced to a minimum. But assembly-rooms in northern climates stand in a different category, and as stated by Mr. Roth, although in most civilized countries attempts are made to regulate the plan and construction of such places, yet there is not, even in London, a theatre which, structurally, can be considered perfect, which obeys the prescribed regulations, and which maintains all its appliances and arrangements in thorough working order and repair." While fire-escapes and fire-proof ceilings, stage, galleries, flies, etc., are most important questions to be considered in connection with life, yet it is to the aggregation of people in close spaces that from the health standpoint these structures must be viewed. It is well said, as referred to by Roth, that the most important feature of the construction of a theatre, is as to the arrangements for ventilation. The rule for

seats is that the backs should be at least two feet six inches between the rows, and each person should not have less than one foot eight inches by two feet four inches to himself. This gives barely four square feet of floor space to each person, which, multiplied by the height of the roof, gives the amount of air space for each person, lessened, however, by the amount of impure gases, due to the combustion of gas. Remembering that a person in the fresh air has a change of atmosphere with an ordinary breeze, over 25,000 times in an hour, we can at once appreciate the remark that ventilation of theatres and other public buildings, viz., schools, can only be satisfactorily effected by mechanical means. The difference in attractiveness between stuffy old theatres and those constructed with a view to good ventilation is such that the general public are beginning to select, not only because of the celebrity of some special star performer, but also because of the health conditions of the play-house. Most can so well remember, after a single experience of the foul, stuffy atmosphere of some of our churches, theatres, etc., the headaches, want of appetite, and sore throat, which was the necessary sequence to the pleasure, that they do not readily repeat the experience unless under great encouragement. Alas! that the excuse should seem to have some grounds in the case of the churches, for it were perhaps not a bad way in the case of some theatres to cure the *habitués* of all desire to re-visit them. The fact of great, although perhaps less importance than in the case of schools, is that such are become too frequently the medium for communicating diseases of a contagious character. Remembering that the air-passages, dry, irritated, and congested, after three or more hours in a theatre, are suddenly exposed toward midnight to the chilly, frosty air in this climate, it is no wonder that germs of diseases inhaled in such an air are very likely to inoculate those who have inhaled such. A curious case was several years ago related, as occurring in an eastern Ontario town, where diphtheria had occurred in the family of the caretaker of the town-hall, who lived in the building. The hall was during this time used one evening for a public ball. One of the children died in the ground apartments on this same evening, and some days later two of the young ladies present at the hall took the disease. It might perhaps seem too radical for the State in this country